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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

English Local Government: The Story of the King's Highway. By SIDNEY and BEATRICE WEBB. London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913. Pp. x+279. \$2.50 net.

This is another volume of these authors' series of studies in English Local Government, of which there have already been issued *The Parish and the County* and *The Manor and the Borough*; but while the two earlier publications dealt with the structure of local government, this is an account of the application of local government to the administration of the roads of the kingdom. A short initial chapter is devoted to the period before the sixteenth century, concerning which the authors have made no special research, but utilize the best material that has been published up to this time. This has been included in order to round out the story. Beginning with the Tudor time and carrying the research down to the present day, the work has been done in a thorough and painstaking way. From the time of the first great highway act of 1555 down to that of 1909, the various changes in the system of administration are traced with sufficient detail to show the outstanding features of the various epochs. This is not an economic study, although economic conditions are reflected by implication from other facts; it is rather a study of the systems of maintenance and management which appeared in the evolution of road administration, and in which we see the various stages of local government, from the Court Leet to the County Council. Much attention is naturally given to the legislation during these last four centuries, since this is the basis of any adequate consideration of the government and regulation of the highways and their traffic; but the statutory material is not given in the language of the parliamentary committee but in the familiar phraseology of everyday speech, so that it thereby assumes a vital interest.

The method of repairing roads by statute labor, which began in 1555 and required all the parishioners to put in a certain number of days' work each year upon the highways, continued for about three hundred years; and the period down to the end of the eighteenth century, with its vast amount of legislation evidently based upon an assumption

that the traffic should be made to accord with the nature of the roads, gave place to the period when the road engineers, like Telford and Macadam, acting on the contrary assumption, began to construct roads that were suitable for the traffic that was to be carried. Synchronous with these three centuries, the parochial road administration, the use of the presentment and indictment, the maintenance of bridges, and the turnpike system are lucidly and discriminatingly treated. The forced statute labor and the turnpike tolls of this period gave way, after the first third of the nineteenth century, to a system of compulsorily levied rates, and along with this change all the roads of a district were placed under the control of the general local governing authority of that district, which employed permanent professional salaried officials to look after the work. This evolution was the work of the last century. On the last two pages of the book we have the only suggestions made for a constructive program of highway organization.

The reviewer has very minutely examined, during years of research, the ground which is here covered by the authors; and he has been unable to find any substantial errors as to fact. The thorough comprehension of the subject enables them to marshal proof upon proof where this is necessary, and to enter into great detail regarding important matters. The constant presentation through quotations, always well chosen, of the contemporary viewpoint, enables one the more faithfully to reconstruct the actual conditions of the time, and gives a historic interest that is indubitable. The notes and references at the end of each chapter furnish abundant bibliographical material.

In contrast with its excellences, the few defects of the book are almost unworthy of mention. The statement that the great majority of roads in America are not bounded by fences (p. 6) is not true. Among the references for p. 115 (p. 147), Act 15 Car. II. c. 1 was renewed by Acts 16 and 17 Car. II. c. 10 and 4 W. and M. c. 9, not by 26 Car. II. and 4 and 5 W. and M., as stated by the authors. It was surely a typographical error that put the word "containing" (p. 116) instead of "continuing." The use of the word "worse" (p. 165) instead of "worse" or "poorer," and the incomplete sentence beginning, "Both master and men . . ." (p. 138) may also be explained as due to mistakes of printing.

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